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To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

To whom it may concern,

I have been following the Microsoft antitrust case since its early beginnings. I would like to humbly suggest a possible remedy.

Years ago, IBM released the IBM PC. Although the PC is now the computer hardware platform of choice (as opposed to Apple's Macintosh or the now defunct DEC Alpha), very few of the PCs sold today are actually made by IBM. The creation of the IBM-compatible computer allowed third party companies to sell computers on which PC software would run, without having to pay residuals to IBM. This allowed the explosion of diversity of software that we have enjoyed over the last decade. As hardware competition brought computer prices down, consumers benefited from the broad variety of offerings and software vendors flourished on platform that allowed them to sell to a wider audience than ever before.

What I propose is simple: we need to encourage the creation of Windows-compatible operating systems. If there were other companies besides Microsoft who could sell an operating system that could run the same programs as Windows, at no additional expense to the consumer or software vendor, then Microsoft's monopoly would be broken without directly penalizing them. In fact, if there were an industry of Windows-compatible OS vendors, each one would try to distinguish itself by bundling useful software or partnering with other software companies to provide value-added packages. While Microsoft remains a monopoly, these practices make competition nearly impossible, but in a free market with fair competition these same tactics become acceptable and even encouraged.

Consider the case of Netscape Navigator vs. Internet Explorer. When Microsoft decided to bundle IE with Windows, there wouldn't have been any problem if Netscape could have made a deal with a competing OS vendor to bundle its software. But since there were no competing vendors, Netscape's demise was guaranteed.

So how do we encourage and empower companies to create Windows-compatible operating systems? By exposing the internals of Windows to the public. If the source code for each version of Windows that was obsolete (no longer on store shelves) was released to the public under an open source license like the GPL, it would allow third party companies to create compatible operating systems. Microsoft could still compete and even dominate the industry by producing high quality software and bundling them with the latest version. However, since many software products require it in order to run, tightly bundled software like DirectX which provides additional graphics capabilities to Windows programs would also have to be made open

source (except for the latest version, of course).

If this remedy is applied, it would benefit all parties involved: consumers benefit from lower prices on software and operating system upgrades, software vendors could sell their products to a larger market, computer science researchers benefit from the years of technical innovation that made Windows possible, and Microsoft can still remain the leading operating system vendor in the market (at least for the next five years).

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